

NLD Statement 40/2000:

National League for Democracy
No: (97/B), West Shwegonedine Road
Bahan Township, Rangoon
Statement 40 (3/00) (translation)

1. We have received news about the grievances of those people living in Ein-mai township, Irrawaddy Division.
2. For three days in succession during the month of December, last year, under orders from the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC), people had to give forced labour in watering car roads to settle the dust. Threats held out by the authorities were that failure to comply would result in severe repercussions.
3. Out of great fear and despite the problem of daily survival everyone had to go out on the roads including mothers with babies in their arms. These mothers had to leave their suckling infants under trees and join the workforce which included women, children, and the old. They had to carry water on their heads for sprinkling on the roads. Children that were left unattended under the trees were seen screaming and crying. A very depressing and agonizing sight!
4. The reason for this 3 day frenzied dust-settling, water sprinkling episode was the expected visit of Secretary 1 of the SPDC. At the end of it all, he did not get there.
5. Another grievance that has been revealed relates to money-for-paddy-loans forced upon the cultivators by members of the Township PDC and one U Pe Kyin. The initial arrangement made in the rainy season was for an advance payment at the rate of Kyats 300/- to be repaid in paddy (one basket per acre of paddy).
6. At harvest time when the market price was Kyat 750/- per basket the TPDC refused to accept paddy as agreed but insisted that the money advanced be repaid in cash. There are altogether 97 village tracts with about 1000 acres each so the profit on the investment realized by the TPDC will total to over 436 lakhs. This exploitation of the farmers is bleeding them and the farmers are hurting badly.
7. Paddy Purchase Centre operators are in league with the inspecting and local authorities and are cheating the cultivators in weighing and measuring the paddy brought for sale to the center. Thus the farmer loses about 10 baskets out of every 100 baskets he supplies and this dishonest collusion of the authorities is causing mounting anger.
8. From what is happening as set out above, it is obvious that the hierarchy below is motivated by a desire to please the upper echelons and are absolutely indifferent to the sufferings and hardships of the people who have to do their bidding. This trampling and tyrannical oppression of the people is so unjust, we strongly condemn those who are indulging in these high handed methods in dealing with the people and ask for change.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
31 March 2000